

# ARS □ CSREES □ ERS □ NASS

## *Policies and Procedures*

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This P&P provides instructions to originators and users of Economics agencies forms. It describes the steps involved in managing the forms program, and originating, printing, and ordering forms.

## Table Of Contents

1.	Introduction . . . . .	3
	Need for Forms Management . . . . .	3
	Management of the Forms Program . . . . .	3
2.	Operating the Forms Program . . . . .	3
	Forms Analysis . . . . .	4
	Approval and Control . . . . .	4
	Design and Composition . . . . .	4
	Reproduction, Storage, and Stocking . . . . .	5
	Periodic Forms Review . . . . .	6
	Coordination and Training . . . . .	6
3.	Requesting Forms Design . . . . .	7
	Originators of Economics Agencies Forms . . . . .	7
	Required Statements Include necessary regulatory statements. . . . .	8
	Users of AD, SF, and OF Forms . . . . .	8
	Exceptions to AD, SF, and OF Forms . . . . .	9
4.	Ordering Forms . . . . .	10
	Electronic Fill-In Forms . . . . .	10
	All Other Forms . . . . .	10
5.	Challenging Forms . . . . .	11
	Summary of Responsibilities . . . . .	11

# 1. Introduction

## Need for Forms Management

- Federal agencies use forms to organize, collect, and transmit information. By their specific characteristics, forms
- often guide the flow of work through an office or an entire organization.
- further the efficiency and accuracy of many administrative and operating tasks or procedures with minimal back-tracking or delay.
- provide the means for collecting and transmitting information quickly and efficiently, compiling a compact record, and standardizing tasks and procedures.

## Management of the Forms Program

The Chief of EMS's Management Analysis Branch (MAB) oversees the Economics agencies forms management program. A forms manager is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the program.

# 2. Operating the Forms Program

MAB operates the Economics agencies forms program (including all EMS, ERS, and WAOB forms; and only NASS's administrative forms. NASS operates a separate program for its program-related forms). Program functions include:

- ☞ Analysis ;
- ☞ Approval and Control
- ☞ Design and Composition
- ☞ Reproduction, Storage, and Stocking
- ☞ Periodic Forms Review



## Forms Analysis

MAB analyzes each new, revised, or reprinted form for need, effectiveness, and economy. To ensure that the form serves its intended purpose, MAB examines it for content, its effect on work methods and procedures, and for its layout and construction.

## Approval and Control

MAB assigns each new or revised form a number and an edition date, and maintains the following forms control records and files:

**Historical files.** The official background files that consist of a record of each form from development to current status.

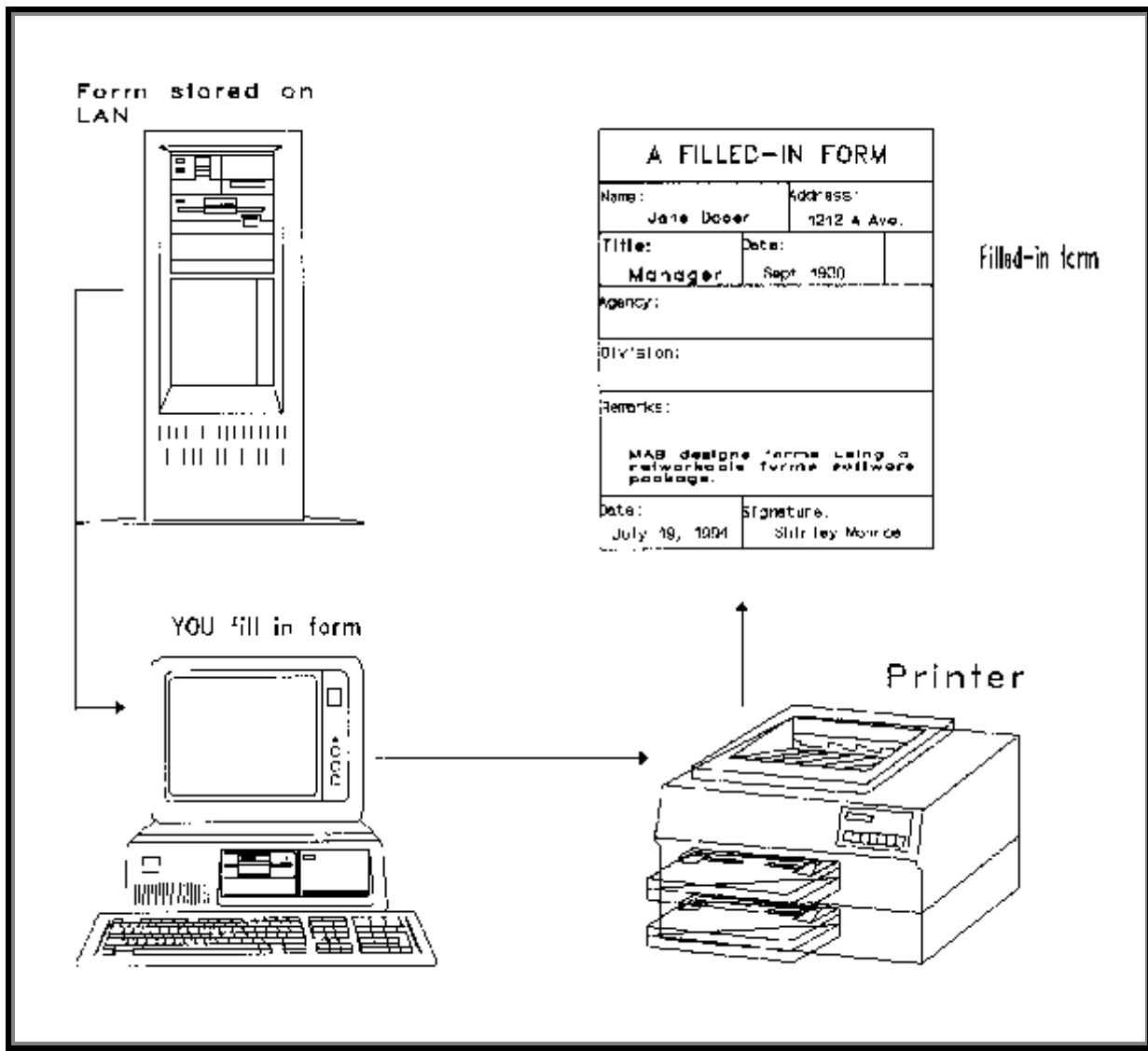
**Functional files.** Used during forms analysis, contain a copy of related forms classified by subject. It is a working tool that brings together forms dealing with similar subjects and functions.

**Forms index.** Used to publish a catalog of all Economics agencies forms, provides a complete listing of current, approved agency forms.

## Design and Composition

MAB designs forms using a networkable forms software package. Forms design and composition conform to the standards and guidelines set forth in the General Services Administration (GSA) Handbook, Forms Analysis and Design. For the most part, these forms are electronically created and stored on local area networks (LANs) for user access. Users may retrieve, fill-in, store, transmit, and print forms from personal computers.

In addition to Economics agencies forms, MAB designs Agriculture Department (AD) forms, and Standard and Optional forms (SF and OF), except those that GSA says may not be electronically generated.



## Reproduction, Storage, and Stocking

**Reproduction, storage, and stocking of most forms is unnecessary.** MAB provides electronically designed forms to LAN administrators in the Economics agencies. They place the forms on a file server, which makes them available to users with the filler software as needed. Storing forms on a LAN file server eliminates the need to print and manually stock forms in valuable office space, and ensures that the latest version is always available.

These LAN forms consist of those that can be filled-in electronically as well as those requiring completion by hand. However, there are a few forms that do not lend themselves to electronic fill-in or storage. For example:

- folders—EMS-1, OPF Charge Out Folder; and EMS-532, Purchase/Delivery Order Folder;
- cards—EMS-2, OPF Disposition Record; and EMS-380, Application for Change in Tour of Duty; and
- stickers—EMS-40, Priority Mail Sticker; EMS-518, Maintenance Agreement Notice; and ERS-26, USDA/ERS Employee Work Pass).

MAB arranges for the printing, storage, and stocking of these types of forms. If a form is not available on your LAN, contact MAB.

## Periodic Forms Review

MAB reviews each form periodically to determine if the form is still effective and economical. To conduct this review, MAB consults with managers, originators, processors, and users of a form to identify problems and recommend needed changes.

## Coordination and Training

MAB maintains several continuing relationships:

**Reports Management.** The reports management staff is concerned with information collected and used by the agency. Much of this information is in forms. Neither the reports manager nor the forms manager can operate effectively without systematic and constant coordination.

**Issuances (P&P) Management.** A form must be prescribed by a P&P, unless it is self-explanatory. A P&P makes the introduction of a form official and ensures that correct clearance procedures are followed. P&Ps provide the best medium for communicating guidance that cannot be placed completely on the face of the form, including:

- clear instructions on who prepares the form, the number of copies prepared, and where and when to submit copies.
- a sample illustration of the form with sample entries, when this will help to ensure the accurate completion of the form.
- a description of the filing system used, if the records are kept in a specific way or for a specific length of time.

- unusual information about the availability of the form; i.e., its source and date of supply.

MAB's forms staff reviews P&Ps referencing forms. Likewise, before a new form is created, the MAB forms staff requests copies of related P&Ps and/or other prescribing documents.

**ADP Personnel.** Coordination with the forms management staff on ADP system forms should be a routine part of their development and programming.

In addition to coordinating and maintaining these relationships with other agency activities, MAB provides basic forms management training and training on the use of the filler software.

### 3. Requesting Forms Design

This chapter explains the process for requesting new forms or changes to existing forms. Anyone may make such requests.

#### Originators of Economics Agencies Forms

Before requesting the creation of a new form, consider the following questions:

<p>· Is the form really necessary?C·</p> <p>a n a n e x i s t i n g f o r m m e e t t h i s n e e d ?</p> <p>· Will the proposed form fit the present or anticipated procedure?</p> <p>· Will It Improve operations?</p> <p>· Will It be economical to use?</p>	<p>· If the answers to the above questions justify the creation of a new form, discuss the form's workload requirement with the individuals and/or offices having an interest in the form.</p> <p>· Prepare a rough draft (or note proposed changes on a copy of an existing form).</p>
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- Complete form EMS-8, Request for Form Design.
- Submit the draft copy and the EMS-8 to the appropriate official within your organization for review. If approved, submit it to MAB.

## **Required Statements Include necessary regulatory statements.**

Forms used for claims or certification must declare criminal penalties for deliberate falsification, such as,

- Claim forms: "A knowingly false claim is a criminal offense. Title 18 U.S.C., section 1001."
- Forms not involving claims: "A willful false statement is a criminal offense. Title 18 U.S.C., section 1001."

Forms approved by OMB under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 must contain a statement listing the burden estimate and a request for public comments.

The Privacy Act of 1974 requires the explanation to individuals directly solicited to give personal information: -

- the authority (whether granted by statute or by executive order) that authorized the solicitation of the information.
- the intended use of the information.
- routine uses of the information.
- whether the disclosures of the information are mandatory or voluntary and the effects on individuals who do not provide all or any part of the requested information.

## **Users of AD, SF, and OF Forms**

Submit to MAB a blank copy and a filled-in version of the form.

MAB, upon completion of forms design work,

- clears the final copy with the originating office for Economics agencies' forms.

- requests approval of final copy from the Departmental Forms Manager for AD, SF, and OF forms.
- provides approved forms to LAN administrators.

## Exceptions to AD, SF, and OF Forms

Certain exceptions to forms are granted when it can be demonstrated that changing the content, format, or printing is cost effective.

- **Content** exceptions are changes to the data elements of the form such as additions, deletions, or revisions.
- **Format** exceptions are changes made by rearranging the data elements or changing the spacing of entries on a form without change to data elements.
- **Printing** exceptions are changes in the printing specifications for a form (such as changes to paper, including size, and establishment of sets and marginally punched constructions) that result in no changes in content or format.

To request exceptions, submit the following to MAB for approval:

### AD Forms

- an original and one copy of form AD-687, Forms Action Request and Notice;
- sample copies of proposed changes; and
- justification or supporting documents.

### SF and OF Forms

- an original and three copies of SF-152, Request for Clearance, Procurement, or Cancellation of Standard and Optional Forms;
- sample copies of proposed changes; and
- a justification statement explaining the reasons for the request, including why the standard or optional form cannot be used in the prescribed, existing format or construction or is not economical as prescribed; the proposed alterations or changes; the expected cost benefits; and an estimate of the number of forms expected to be used in 1 year. Since the use of optional

forms is not mandatory, an exception is not required if an agency elects not to use an optional form.

After review, MAB will forward the package to the Departmental Forms Manager.

## 4. Ordering Forms

### Electronic Fill-In Forms

Forms that can be filled-in with personal computers are stored on LANs and are available for use as needed. If a supply of blank forms are required, users can:



- print, via office laser printer, the number of copies required, or
- print a supply of the form (using the LAN version as a camera copy) via the USDA Short Order Duplicating Stations, USDA Printing Plant, or, if a field office, via a local printer.

### All Other Forms

**Economics Agencies Forms.** MAB stocks Economics agencies forms and, upon request, makes them available to users without charge.

**AD, SF, and OF Forms.** Order AD, SF, and OF forms from either the Consolidated Forms and Publication Distribution Center (CFPDC) or GSA.

CFPDC-Stocked Forms:

-  **Electronic Ordering.** If possible, use the electronic ordering system. To do so, your office must have an appropriate computer terminal and telephone modem. This method reduces order turn-around time and minimizes data entry time and errors. Contact MAB for required customer identification numbers.
-  **Mail Orders.** Submit CFPDC Form 1, Request for Forms and Publications, when ordering 15 line items or less. When ordering more than 15 line items, use CFPDC Form 1A (Continuation Sheet). Be sure to include the order number from CFPDC Form 1 in the space provided on the continuation sheet.

## GSA-Stocked Forms:

- ✎ Complete and submit form AD-633, Multiuse Standard Requisitioning/Issue System Document to the GSA FSS office servicing your region. Detailed ordering procedures are found in the FEDSTRIP Operating Guide.

## 5. Challenging Forms

Economics agencies personnel should critically evaluate frequently used forms and make recommendations for improvements or deletions to MAB, including reasons for any changes. Employees should consider these questions:

- What other forms provide all or part of the information requested?
- Why is the form cumbersome?
- Why is the requested information either not available, available only at an unreasonable cost, or of questionable value?
- Why has the form lost validity or currency?

## Summary of Responsibilities

### Chief, EMS's Management Analysis Branch

- Manages the Economics Agencies Forms Management Program.
- Assures conformity with Departmental policies and standards, including adequate systems for reviewing, clearing, costing, and controlling forms.
- Analyzes and designs all Economics agencies forms (except nonadministrative NASS forms) to conform with standards prescribed in the GSA Forms Design Handbook (including envelopes and letterhead).
- Designs electronic versions of AD, SF, and OF forms upon request.

- Assists the Economics agencies in establishing and implementing agency forms management programs.
- Maintains a central historical file of internal agency forms.
- Monitors forms usage and stocking quantities.
- Coordinates forms management with other areas of information management.
- Analyzes, reviews, and approves requests for exceptions to SF, OF, and AD forms, before forwarding to the Departmental Forms Management Officer (DFMO).
- Notifies the DFMO of needed changes on AD forms, and submits copies to the DFMO for review.
- Approves forms for usage and printing.

#### **Division Directors, Branch Chiefs, and Section Heads**

- Coordinate forms management within the organization following procedures in this P&P.
- Provide liaison with MAB.
- Approve forms for usage and printing.

#### **Survey Management Division, NASS**

- Provides all forms management support to NASS for program forms and questionnaires.

#### **EMS Printing Officer**

- Processes all Economics agencies forms printing orders.

#### **Originators of Forms**

- Ensure that an issuance prescribes and supports the use of each form.
- Develop draft, design, and layout for the forms that they originate.

- Establish initial quantities and determine inventory and reorder levels for such forms.
- Develop justification statements to obtain approval for exceptions to SF, OF, and AD forms.

#### **All Forms Users**

- Notify MAB when electronic forms require adjustments.
- Order forms only when necessary.
- Evaluate frequently used forms and make recommendations for improvements or deletions.